

Draft

The Honorable Phil Andrews, President
Montgomery County Council
Stella B. Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland, 20850

Re: Draft 2009-2011 Montgomery County Growth Policy

Dear Mr. Andrews:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Montgomery County 2009-2011 Growth Policy. We would like to offer comments on issues that are of concern to the City of Rockville.

In general, Rockville supports the County's broad growth strategy, in which growth is directed towards infill areas previously developed as commercial or industrial uses, as opposed to previously undeveloped locations. We appreciate the importance of maximizing our investment in existing infrastructure, and growing in an environmentally sustainable manner; and these broad principles have guided our own approach to Rockville Town Center, as well as to the current process to update the plan for the City's portion of Rockville Pike. The changes proposed to the Growth Policy are clearly intended to move development in that direction.

We would, however, like to offer some comments regarding interrelated items. We have recently offered testimony on the Draft Master Plans for the Gaithersburg West and White Flint sectors. In that testimony, we have indicated our support for the general approach to transit-oriented growth, but also outlined our concerns about the intensity of development that is anticipated, and whether there is adequate mitigation for the impacts of that level of intensity. Both Draft Master Plans acknowledge the large level of investments in public infrastructure and services that will be necessary in order to implement the plans. If Montgomery County is to adopt these heightened densities, it is imperative that there be an equivalent commitment to addressing the necessary investments in schools, transit, roads, community centers, open spaces, and other public services. Otherwise, the quality of life will suffer in these high-density communities and in neighboring affected jurisdictions such as Rockville.

We acknowledge that the Draft 2009-2011 Growth Policy suggests that future master plans recommend alternate funding mechanisms, such as directing mitigation resources towards transit in transit-oriented areas, and establishing special taxing districts in areas such as White Flint that are targeted for the densest levels of growth. However, we are concerned that the competition for scarce public resources will make it very difficult to

meet all the needs that are being defined by the master plans and the Growth Policy. The City is particularly concerned with the continuing levels of school overcrowding and traffic. Increasing the threshold for collecting developer fees, from 105% to 110% of program school capacity, appears to conflict with the broad citizen support for maintaining Montgomery County's nationally recognized school system.

The City of Rockville strongly recommends that the County Council, the Planning Board, and the Executive branch engage in an intensive effort to align master plans, policies and the Capital Improvement Program to ensure that policies and plans are supportable and supported by necessary public investments; and that this alignment be reflected in the General Plan, the Growth Policy and the individual master plans.

Thank you for your attention to this testimony.

Sincerely,

Mayor Susan R. Hoffmann

cc: Isiah Leggett, Montgomery County Executive
Montgomery County Council
Councilmember John Britton
Councilmember Piotr Gajewski
Councilmember Phyllis Marcuccio
Councilmember Anne M. Robbins
City of Rockville Planning Commission
Royce Hanson, Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board
Rollin Stanley, Planning Director, MNCPPC
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